

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

November 3, 2005

The Honorable Mike Johanns
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

I would like to thank you for visiting with Washington state producers today. I apologize that votes in Washington, D.C. prevent me from joining you.

Washington state has a long and proud agricultural legacy and the 2007 Farm Bill must continue to provide a solid foundation for Washington state farmers.

Before I address the 2007 Farm Bill, I would like to say that Washington agriculture faces major economic challenges and many farmers are going out of business this fall. These challenges include high fuel and fertilizer prices and difficult resource issues, issues associated with urban growth, transportation, and continued difficulties accessing foreign markets. I realize that some conditions are beyond the control of USDA. However, many actions of USDA have hurt Washington farmers.

The market distortion caused by lowering the soft white wheat loan rate and the harm inflicted on Washington wheat farmers by Emerson Trust wheat sales must be addressed to ensure Washington's strong wheat legacy continues. I am disappointed that the administration has not prioritized opening up Japan and Korea for beef exports. Half of all Washington beef was exported prior to December of 2003. Furthermore, I am disappointed that USDA has done little to help Washington fruit and vegetable producers who face difficult foreign market challenges: including Canada's blocking Washington potato imports, our policies in Peru which have devastated the Washington asparagus industry, and numerous sanitary and phyto-sanitary barriers keeping Washington products out of many countries. Meanwhile, a lack of commitment to protecting our farms from pests and diseases has led to new pests and diseases which present major challenges to Washington farmers.

Mr. Secretary, I hope that after this listening session you and I will be able to work on these issues which are critical to the economic vitality of Washington producers.

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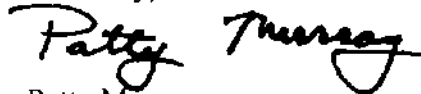
As we begin to look at the 2007 Farm Bill, I hope that it will truly expand the foundation to provide services and resources for all producers — including fruit and vegetable growers. As a leading specialty crop state it is vital that USDA move forward with programs that are specifically aimed at helping specialty crops with marketing and research. It also must provide the proper safety net for our farmers. Programs once heralded as ensuring the future of farming, such as counter-cyclical payments - are being seen as a failure by soft white wheat producers who have been unable to access these benefits.

Furthermore, the 2007 Farm Bill must continue to provide strong programs that enable our agricultural industry to thrive and compete internationally. Assistance in foreign market development and pest and disease protection provided by USDA are vital to Washington producers. Programs like MAP and TASC need to be expanded to help farmers take advantage of the free trade agreements and sell their products internationally. Likewise, a major increase in the size and scope of APHIS is necessary because new pests and diseases seem to be expanding each day - from BSE and Sudden Oak Death to Avian flu - the challenges are many.

Finally, I believe the 2007 Farm Bill must provide resources through conservation programs that help producers meet the many difficult resource concerns.

Secretary Johanns, thank you for coming out to Washington state to gather input from our large and varied agricultural industry. I look forward to working with you to address these serious issues facing Washington state farmers and on the development of the 2007 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patty Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patty" and last name "Murray" clearly distinguishable.

Patty Murray
United States Senator

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James D. Smith